



King County

The King County Code of Ethics

Helping Employees Make Ethical Decisions

- It's the Annual Ethics Quiz!
- Take the challenge and test your ethics knowledge.
- Everyone who completes all 9 questions is eligible to win a prize from a random drawing!
 - ❖ \$20 certificate at Landmark Theaters
 - ❖ \$15 certificate at Safeway
 - ❖ \$6 certificate at Starbucks

~Prizes were purchased from local businesses~

To be eligible for the drawing, complete your quiz by Friday, October 22, 2010.

- Your participation helps the Board of Ethics better serve you. Questions? Call the Ethics Help Line at 296-1586.

THANK YOU!

Your personal responses are confidential, but
group results will be made available at a later date.

Good luck!

The quiz consists of 9 ethics scenarios based on actual situations encountered by county employees, followed by three survey questions. Apply the basic principles of public service and your knowledge of the King County Code of Ethics to each situation. In each case there is one best response or approach that will resolve the ethical dilemma. Correct responses and explanations appear once you have submitted your answers.

1. You work with a particular company as part of your county job responsibilities. The company is throwing a big celebration in honor of its 100th anniversary in business. They sent invitations to you and your work colleagues, as well as many other people in the community. May you and your colleagues attend? (Attendance at events)

- a. You may not attend since you have job responsibilities related to the business.
- b. You may attend, but don't tell the others.
- c. You and your colleagues may attend if you pay for your refreshments.
- d. You may attend if you don't eat anything.

c. You and your colleagues may attend if you pay for your refreshments.

Explanation: County employees may attend functions hosted by those doing business with the county, consistent with the Code of Ethics, if a determination is made in advance of the fair market value of the event and its costs, and payment is made in advance to the person sponsoring the event in that amount. Departments are encouraged to also consider the appearance of conflict to ensure citizens' trust in government and may make more restrictive policies if they choose. (K.C.C. 3.04.030)

2. You are a manager and you learn that one of your staff has gone to the ethics office with some kind of complaint. What do you do? (Ethics policies)

- a. Call a general meeting and demand to know who went and why.
- b. Inform everyone that they must first notify their supervisor before calling the ethics office.
- c. Let employees know that you encourage ethics questions, and that you are available if anyone has any comments or concerns.
- d. Call the ethics office yourself to find out the name of the troublemaker.

c. Let employees know that you encourage ethics questions, and that you are available if anyone has any comments or concerns.

Explanation: In real life, ethics dilemmas occur every day! Encourage employees to talk about ethics issues and help staff to resolve problems effectively. When employees are encouraged to openly communicate about ethics issues that arise in the normal course of business, the county creates an environment in which ethics is a customary part of the workplace. Every county agency must inform its employees about the ethics code and enforce its requirements. (K.C.C. 3.04.015) Questions? Call the Ethics Help Line at 296-1586.

3. Why do we have a Code of Ethics anyway? (County policy and values)

- a. To express the county's commitment to ethical values.
- b. To help ensure the public's trust and confidence in county government.
- c. To provide guidance to county employees and elected officials.
- d. All of the above.

d. All of the above.

Explanation: King County believes that public confidence in government is essential and is sustained by establishing and enforcing rules to assure the impartiality and honesty of elected officials and employees in all public transactions and decision. The code provides a road map for employees when they are faced with ethics dilemmas in their work life. When employees know that ethical values are important to county leadership, they are more likely to ensure public trust by supporting the ethics code. (K.C.C. 3.04.015)

4. A fellow employee has small outside business – Avon Calling! She sells products at work and has a little display in the break room. What are county policies about sales or solicitation at work? (Use of county resources)

- a. It is fine to run a small business at work as long as you aren't bothering anyone.
- b. Engaging in outside business activities using county resources is strictly prohibited.
- c. If you sell the products during the lunch hour its okay since it is on your own time.
- d. You should be commended for being so entrepreneurial.

Engaging in outside business activities using county resources is strictly prohibited.

Explanation: Even though your co-worker is not officially on county time during her lunch hour, she still is using a county office building for her private business. These public resources may not be used for private gain or personal profit. Similar restrictions on use of county resources affect employee solicitation for charitable and non-profit organizations, unless such activity is considered official county business such as the Employee Giving Program. (K.C.C. 3.04.020) Check with your supervisor to see what policies are in place in your agency or call the Ethics Help Line at 296-1586.

**5. Which of the following topics are included in the King County Code of Ethics?
(Knowledge of code provisions)**

- a. Use of county resources
- b. Second jobs and post-employment
- c. Harassment from co-worker or boss
- d. Acceptance of gifts and meals
- e. Use of official position for gain
- f. Political activities in the workplace
- g. Unfair disciplinary action
- h. Conflicts of Interest

a. Use of county resources; b. Second jobs and post-employment; d. Acceptance of gifts and meals; e. Use of official position for gain; f. Political activities in the workplace; h. Conflicts of Interest.

Explanation: Issues of (c) workplace harassment and (g) disciplinary action are not under the jurisdiction of the Code of Ethics, but are best handled by contacting your supervisor, your Human Resources Service Delivery Manager, or the human resources personnel within your agency. (K.C.C. 3.04)

6. While reviewing a permit for a controversial development, the developer offers you a position with his company. May you continue to work on the review if you want to take the new job offer? (Conflict of interest/future employment/duty to notify)

- a. Yes, and expedite the review so I can begin salary negotiations.
- b. No, and immediately notify my supervisor.
- c. Yes. The job offer won't influence my review.
- d. Yes, because I am not interested in leaving my position.

b. No, and immediately notify my supervisor.

Explanation: While this may be a great opportunity, if you discuss future employment with a company over whom you have responsibilities, your decision-making could be biased. At the very least, it could create the appearance of conflict for you and place the agency's reputation at risk. To ensure transparency with this consultant and the project, you must notify your supervisor in writing of the contact and the supervisor is required under the ethics code to respond back to you in writing as to how he or she will resolve the situation. If you want to pursue the job, the supervisor must replace you with another employee, or you must wait until you no longer have any job responsibilities related to the vendor. (K.C.C. 3.04.030 & K.C.C. 3.04.037)

7. Kathy brings a petition to work opposing a controversial ballot proposition. After spending the morning gathering signatures around the office, she reaches your desk. She asks you to sign the petition, arguing that county workers will lose their jobs if the measure passes. What do you do? (Campaign activities)

- a. Avoid the issue by leaving to attend an important meeting.
- b. Sign the petition to keep your job.
- c. Sign and offer to assist in the workplace campaign.
- d. Remind her that campaign activities in the workplace aren't allowed.

d. Remind her that campaign activities in the workplace aren't allowed.

Explanation: County employees are encouraged to participate in the political process on their own time, outside the workplace, using their own resources, by working on campaigns for elective office or ballot propositions. Some agencies may have specific additional restrictions depending upon their functions. If in doubt, check with your supervisor. (K.C.C. 3.04.020)

8. You administer a county health facility. Your spouse is the executive director of a non-profit organization that has bid on a contract to provide services to your agency. How do you handle the situation? (Conflict of interest /duty to notify)

- a. Disclose your relationship to your supervisor and recuse yourself from all negotiations or discussions regarding this potential contract.
- b. Ask your spouse to withdraw the bid.
- c. Award the contract.
- d. Tell your assistant to select your spouse because her organization is the lowest bidder and you know it will provide quality services.

a. Disclose your relationship to your supervisor and recuse yourself from all negotiations or discussions regarding this potential contract.

Explanation: Whenever a county employee has a personal or financial interest in a matter in which he or she has official job responsibilities, an appearance of conflict of interest exists. In order to ensure there is no bias in the contract selection, you must ask your supervisor to take responsibility for the selection; you may not delegate the responsibility to an employee you supervise. In that case, you still could be seen as being able to influence the decision. When you notify your supervisor, don't forget to send it in writing and insist on a written response from your boss. ((K.C.C. 3.04.030 & K.C.C. 3.04.037)

9. Retirement is fine, but you're sick of doing the Sudoku and looking for volunteer opportunities. So when a well-known consultant firm asks you to join them, you jump at the chance. The firm tells you they want to assign you to a King County project. What information do you want to know before accepting the work? (Post employment)

- a. Does the work I will perform have anything to do with matters I worked on at the county?
- b. Will my past county employment be disclosed to the county before I start on the job?
- c. Will I be expected to use any privileged or proprietary information to get the position?
- d. All of the above.

d. All of the above.

Explanation: Even though you have left county government, former employees must maintain high ethical standards when contracting or subcontracting with the county, and may not enjoy a competitive edge over others because of inside information or contacts. Employees must wait one full year before returning as a consultant or sub-consultant on matters in which they participated as a county employee, and must disclose this work to the county before the post-employment begins. Consultants who violate this provision may be barred from doing business with the county. Questions? Get the facts @ http://www.kingcounty.gov/employees/ethics/publications/exit_employees.aspx (K.C.C. 3.04.035)

10. Have you ever contacted the ethics office for information on an ethics matter? (If 'no' or 'don't know', skip 11 & 12)

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

11. If yes, thinking of your most recent contact with the ethics office, did the information: (answer all those that apply)

- a. Meet my needs completely
- b. Helped me make my decision
- c. Neither helped nor hindered me
- d. Raised issues but didn't resolve the problem
- e. Didn't really help

12. If you have contacted the ethics office for information on an ethics matter, how would you describe the overall quality of your experience, including timeliness and courtesy?

Were you:

- a. Very satisfied
- b. Satisfied
- c. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- d. Dissatisfied
- e. Very dissatisfied

Your department

Selection box

Do you supervise others?

Yes

No

If you have a question about any ethics issues in this quiz or in your workplace, call the

Ethics Help Line at 296-1586

Calls may be anonymous or confidential. We are here to help!

~End~